



**Susan Warzecha**  
**Union Representative, UFCW Local 371**

**Labor and Public Employees Committee**  
**March 9, 2023**

***SB 1177 An Act Concerning One Fair Wage***

My name is Susan Warzecha, I am a union representative for the UFCW Local 371, but before that, I was a cocktail waitress for twenty-seven years. I am here to testify in support of SB 1177, An Act Concerning One Fair Wage. As a waitress and now as a union representative for waitresses and bartenders, I can tell you that at least 80% of the grievances and issues we have at work are about who is entitled to which shifts and which work locations, because where and when you work is so closely tied to the money you make and how well you can pay your bills and support your families. That means that more often than not, the workers are fighting against each other, rather than working together to bargain for more wages and benefits from our employer.

It's no secret that tipped workers undergo particularly high rates of sexual harassment, and nowhere is this more noticeable than on a casino floor. There is a tremendous power imbalance when a server must wear a revealing outfit and high heel shoes and then pay their bills using the only the tips they receive from (often intoxicated) patrons. I have years of stories, like men asking me to answer trivia questions before tipping me, asking to touch my hair or give me kiss on the cheek before handing me my tip, and my personal favorite, being asked if they can place my tip inside my bra instead of my hand. Eliminating the subminimum wage would reduce the sexual harassment currently endured by tipped workers, the majority of whom are women.

Waitresses and bartenders can make a decent living during the busy days and months, but we need to carefully plan and budget our money for the warmer months when people would rather be outside, or are spending their money on holiday gifts instead. Even something as simple as changing from slot machines that pay you out in coins to ones that give you a slip of paper had a huge impact on our income. Of course, nothing could have prepared our members for the pandemic, which came with the inability to financially survive on unemployment

alone when the casino was closed, and the challenges faced attempting to earn a living when everyone was wearing masks and were afraid to take them off to take a drink. Our industry is extremely fickle and subject to the whims of the wider economic, weather, and hospitality landscape. Eliminating the subminimum wage will give thousands in our state the stability they deserve. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.